

TERRORISM

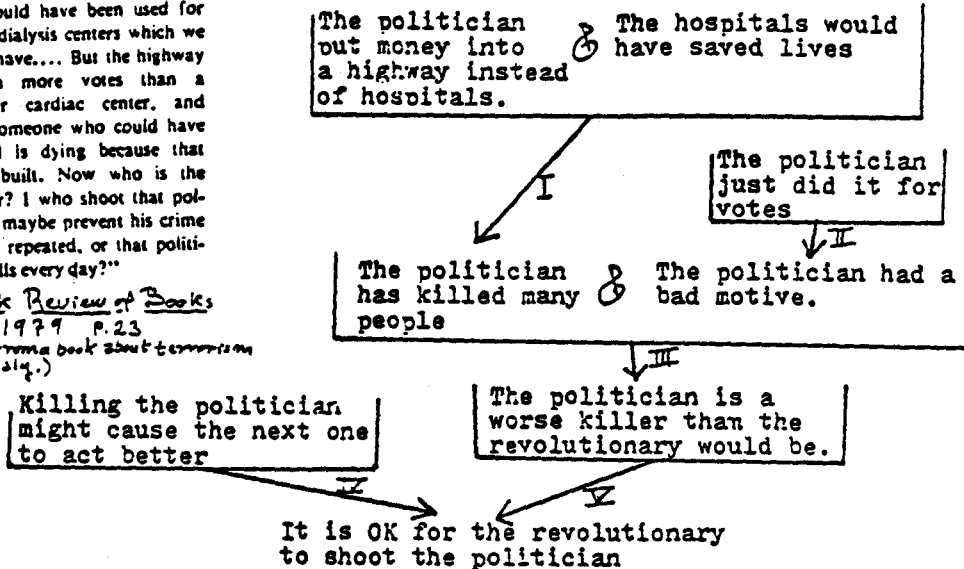
35.

I recall that some time ago a young revolutionary who still claimed to believe in God told me: "Some big politician wanted that highway built [near Padua], and it cost 1.5 trillion lire that could have been used for cardiac or dialysis centers which we still don't have.... But the highway was worth more votes than a hospital or cardiac center, and therefore someone who could have been saved is dying because that road was built. Now who is the worse killer? I who shoot that politician and maybe prevent his crime from being repeated, or that politician who kills every day?"

New York Review of Books
 Aug. 16, 1979 p. 23
 (quoted from a book about terrorism in Italy.)

THRUST: The young revolutionary is defending the shooting of a politician.

The structure can be represented as follows, at least as a first approximation.



On this analysis, there are five interconnected arguments.

I. The premises of argument I are very likely true, but they do not give adequate support to the conclusion. The arguer seems to suppose that if A makes a decision and that decision is part of the cause of the death of B, then A has killed B. But that is wrong; you have to do more than that in order to be someone's killer. (Just exactly what that 'more' is, however, is a difficult question in ethics and law.) So it is HASTY CONCLUSION.

II. Here again the conclusion doesn't follow, at least in a democratic system. Politicians are supposed to do things for votes (though not just anything.) I'd call this IRRELEVANT REASON.

III. Here the inference to the conclusion seems OK, but neither premise has been adequately established. PROBLEMATIC PREMISE.

IV. Here the premise, if true, would give a little support to the conclusion, but not nearly enough. HASTY CONCLUSION. And anyhow, the premise is probably false. The effect of the shooting on the next politician would almost certainly be to make him or her clamp down on the liberties of the people and spend more money on police. PROBLEMATIC PREMISE.

V. The conclusion simply doesn't follow. Two murders are not better than one. It looks very much like the TWO WRONGS fallacy, though it is possible that some other interpretation might be better.

This argument, then, gets absolutely nowhere. It is sad that nonetheless thinking like this does influence some people and cause them to do terrible actions. If only someone would teach them some logic.

R.W. Binkley
 Sept. '79

R.W. Binkley is Professor Robert W. Binkley, Department of Philosophy, University of Western Ontario, publisher of The London Close Reasoner--which he posts on a bulletin board outside his office for his logic students. We are grateful to him for the material found on pp. S22-28.

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DUBIOUS ASSUMPTION

36.

A Debt to Smokers

To the Editor:

Recent news stories told us that:

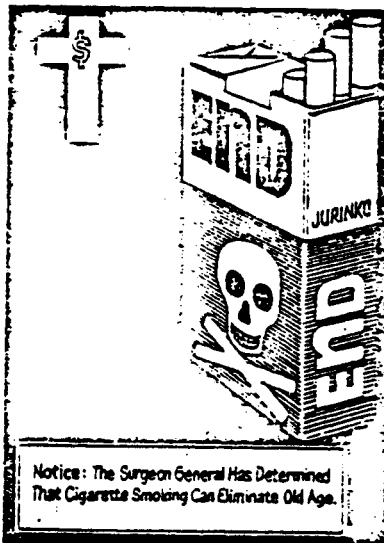
- Thirty-three percent of all Americans smoke.

- An actuarial study by State Mutual Assurance Company concluded that a healthy, non-smoking 32-year-old man can expect to live 7.3 years longer than a healthy, smoking 32-year-old man.

If we assume that smoking is only half as hazardous at other ages and to women, we need merely multiply 220 million by one-third by 7.3 by one-half to come up with the number of years that smoking is taking from the ends of the lives of Americans who are living now: 267.6 million.

During most of these lost years, say 80 percent of them, the victims could have drawn Social Security and other Government benefits.

If we can estimate Social Security, Medicaid and possibly food stamps and related costs at a conservative \$5,000 per year per person, we come up with a 1979 figure of \$1.07 trillion. That amount, so vast that it is hard to com-



prehend, is the money smokers are saving non-smoking taxpayers.

The dissembling miscreants at the Tobacco Institute should use this argument in their lobbying for Government subsidies, advertising media access, etc. It's the only case that can be made for smoking.

RICHARD A. AHERN
Forest Hills, N.Y., Oct. 23, 1979

New York Times 4 Nov. 1979

The argument here is roughly this:

- (a) Smokers have shorter lives (than non-smokers)
- (b) Smokers cost the taxpayer less in Social Security, etc.
- (c) Smokers cost the taxpayer less altogether.
- (d) Smoking should not be discouraged.

The step from (b) to (c), however, involves the assumption that Social Security and similar age related benefits are the only costs that need to be considered. But the fact is that smokers don't just lie down and die; they die only after long, painful, and expensive illnesses. These health costs need to be figured in, since they might change the balance.

RW Brooklyn Nov. 1979.

HASTY CONCLUSION, ETC.

37. [I do, however, differ with Mr. Clark in parts of his analysis. For example, he says he does not feel that the Muzorewa Government has sufficient authority to guarantee stability and security in the country.] In a military sense, this is undoubtedly true. The Government is locked in a savage guerrilla war with the forces of the Patriotic Front and, if the Government has the upper hand it is not by much. [In a political sense, however, the Muzorewa administration seems to have good support in the country.] [People with whom I talked in my four days in Zimbabwe Rhodesia were generally agreed that the April election results were a fair reflection of the public will.]

Mr. Clark is also concerned about the continued presence of Ian Smith in the Muzorewa Cabinet (he is a minister without portfolio). It's a reasonable concern. It is understandable that other African leaders should, as Mr. Clark says, suspect that Mr. Smith is still in control of the police, the army and the civil service.

That's an impossible question for any outsider — white or black — to judge. When I talked to General Peter Walls, who runs the military, he — as one might expect — denied that he takes his orders from Mr. Smith. The blacks whom I met in Zimbabwe Rhodesia did not seem concerned about Mr. Smith's influence. I talked to people who attend Cabinet meetings. They say Prime Minister Muzorewa values Mr. Smith's counsel. But they also say he does not hesitate to reject Mr. Smith's advice if it does not coincide with his own opinion.

From a column by Geoffrey Stevens in The Globe and Mail, 3 August, 1979.

The main thrust of the first paragraph is to argue, in opposition to a view attributed to Clark, that the Muzorewa Government does have sufficient political authority to guarantee stability and security.

The argument may be represented as a two step one, as follows:

(3) People with whom Stevens talked agree that the election reflects the public will
Therefore,

(2) The Muzorewa Government has good political support in the country.
Therefore,

(1) The Muzorewa Government has sufficient authority, in the political sense, to guarantee stability and security.

In the first step, from (3) to (2), we seem to have a case of HASTY CONCLUSION, and perhaps also of IMPROPER APPEAL TO AUTHORITY. In four days Stevens could hardly have carried out an adequate survey of public opinion throughout the country. Insofar as he attempted such a thing, his sample must necessarily have been very small and without any guarantee of its being representative.

He seems instead to have relied on what was said to him about public opinion by those to whom he talked. But he does not say who these people were, or why their statements about public opinion should be accepted. (In the later paragraphs he does mention some of the people he talked to, but these, General Walls, and some persons who attend Muzorewa cabinet meetings, have an obvious bias.)

In the second step, from (2) to (1), there appears to be serious VAGUENESS. What can it mean to say that the government's authority in the political sense is sufficient to guarantee stability and security when the threat to stability and security is a military one?

Perhaps he means something to the effect that if the military threat were somehow to vanish, everything would be fine as far as stability and security go. But then it is not clear that he is disagreeing with Clark, and in professing to be he would be guilty of STRAW MAN.

R.W. Binkley

Who is Castro fooling in 'non-aligned' claim?

BEGGING THE QUES- TION

38.

I was heartened to read your editorial *Whose Man in Havana?* (Sept. 6) commenting on Fidel Castro's claim that he is "non-aligned." If ever there was a case of someone calling "white" "black," this is it. Unfortunately, many ignorant leaders of the Third World countries want to believe what Castro tells them and would like to pretend that they, too, are "non-aligned."



Castro: whose man?

- ① [Castro is the lackey of Moscow [its mouthpiece] and its recipient of vast amounts of aid to further Moscow's policies in Africa and Latin America and even here in training subversives in Quebec.] I only wish more Canadians would realize this and not go on travelling to Cuba for a cheap holiday and put money into the hand that will slap them.
- ②
- ③

David J. Moore
Thornhill

Globe and Mail 22 Sept. '79.
(Toronto)

- ①. Castro is the lackey of Moscow
- ②. Castro is a mouthpiece for Moscow
- ③. Castro receives vast amounts of aid to further Moscow's policies in Africa and Latin America and even here in training subversives in Quebec.

Therefore, (a), Castro is not non-aligned

Premises ① and ② involve BEGGING THE QUESTION, since 'lackey' and 'mouthpiece' are no mere than emotionally charged ways of saying that Castro is aligned with Moscow.

Also, premise ③ has two problematic aspects and so, to a certain extent, we have PROBLEMATIC PREMISE.

First, while it is generally acknowledged that Castro receives a great deal of aid from Moscow, it is not so clear that it is for the purpose of furthering Moscow's policies in Africa, etc. A lot of it, at least, must simply be to help the Cuban economy in the face of the U.S. boycott.

Second, while charges were made several years ago about Cubans training subversives in Quebec, I don't recall that they were ever substantiated (though they may have been) nor was it shown that this was Moscow's policy.

However, premise ③ may also contain the point that Cuba does seem to support the Soviet side on many issues in world affairs. That, if present in ③ would enable that premise to give a certain amount of support to the conclusion.

THRUST: Moore is here attacking Castro's claim to be non-aligned.

His argument* seems to be this:

(* if, indeed, he is offering me.)

R.W. Binkley
25 Sept. '79.

STRAW MEN

39.

Prime Minister Joe Clark should be content to choose the members of the Canadian Cabinet without indulging in impudent attempts to dictate the composition of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian Cabinet as well.

Whether Ian Smith remains a member of the Muzorewa Government should be decided through the domestic political process of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, in accordance with the principle of self-determination — a principle that rules out the external meddling advocated by Mr. Clark. If elected, black leaders wish to treat Mr. Smith and other whites generously, so that their knowledge and experience can contribute to the country's progress, Canada has no just or rational ground on which to object.

In advocating an end to sanctions, Geoffrey Stevens has adopted a much more sensible stand than Mr. Clark. But not all of Mr. Stevens' recent writing on southern Africa has been equally praiseworthy. It is enlightening to contrast some of Mr. Stevens' criticisms of the Republic of South Africa with points made by Dr. L. H. Gann and Dr. Peter Duignan in their book, *South Africa: War, Revolution, or Peace?* (Hoover Institution, 1979). For example, Mr. Stevens states (A Bit of Progress — July 27) that "blacks are still denied access to good jobs in business and industry," whereas Gann and Duignan write correctly: "Africans now occupy an increasing number of skilled and even submanagerial positions."

[Similarly, Mr. Stevens dismisses as "nonsense" the view that there are fewer police in South Africa than in New York City, whereas Gann and Duignan point out: "The proportion of policemen to civilians in South Africa is smaller than it is in the United States."]

As for Mr. Stevens' description of the accommodation for Basters at the Oamibes mine in South West Africa/Namibia (Afternoon Budget — July 30), I myself visited the housing in question last December and cannot agree that the word "slum" is justified even by "Canadian standards." (True, housing in Namibia is not designed for Canadian winters!)

It was not quite cricket for Mr. Stevens to mention the cars and driveways at the whites' homes, without revealing that cars and driveways can be seen (or could be eight months ago) at many of the Basters' homes as well.

Kenneth H. W. Hilborn
Associate Professor of History
University of Western Ontario
London

The Globe and Mail, 8 Aug '79

Long term members of the U.W.O community are familiar with Professor Hilborn's views on southern Africa because of his many public statements on the matter. What is of particular logical interest in the present example is the occurrence of two STRAW MAN fallacies in immediate succession; one does not often find them coming so thick and fast.

In the first STRAW MAN, Hilborn offers statement ②, from his alleged authorities Gann and Duignan, as a refutation of Stevens' statement ①, thus implying that in statement ① Stevens was denying statement ②. But in fact Stevens was doing no such thing, since the two statements are perfectly consistent. Roughly speaking, Stevens is saying that the situation is bad; G&D are saying that it is improving; Stevens could quite consistently reply that even so it is still bad.

In addition, it is not clear that Stevens' "good jobs in business and industry" means the same as G&D's "skilled and even submanagerial positions". Perhaps Stevens was referring to managerial positions, in which case the STRAW MAN would be even more gross.

In the second STRAW MAN, Hilborn offers statement ④, which concerns the police/population ratio for the U.S. as a whole, as a refutation of Stevens' statement ③, which concerned the number (not ratio to population) of police in New York City! Here again Hilborn attributes to Stevens the denial of a claim made by G&D, when he is not really committed to that denial at all.

R.W. Binkley
Aug '79

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Guilt by Association

This is from the September, 1979, issue of Fusion Magazine of the Fusion Energy Foundation, p 2.

(The Fusion Energy Foundation appears to be some kind of pro-nuclear pressure group, but it seems to have other axes to grind as well; it is pro-Plato, anti-Aristotle, Anti-Malthus, anti-Britain, anti-drugs, anti-environmentalism, pro-growth, etc. I can't quite make it all out.)

In context, this cartoon must be seen as a criticism of President Carter's proposal to develop a coal-to-gas technology as a replacement for oil. It seizes on the fact that such a technology was developed in Germany during the Nazi period, and seeks to set up an association in our minds between coal gasification and the Nazi gas chambers, so that our condemnation of the latter will spread to the former.

There is, of course, no logical connection between the two at all. This is a flagrant case of GUILT BY ASSOCIATION, in the sense of Johnson and Blair. Indeed, it is the worst that I have seen in some years.

R.W. Binkley
Oct. '79

41. the robin and the worm

a robin said to an
 angleworm as he ate him
 i am sorry but a bird
 has to live somehow the
 worm being slow witted could
 not gather his
 dissent into a wise crack
 and retort he was
 effectually swallowed
 before he could turn
 a phrase
 by the time he had
 reflected long enough
 to say but why must a
 bird live
 he felt the beginnings
 of a gradual change
 invading him
 some new and disintegrating
 influence
 was stealing along him
 from his positive
 to his negative pole
 and he did not have
 the mental stamina
 of a jonah to resist the
 insidious
 process of assimilation
 which comes like a thief
 in the night
 demons and fishhooks
 he exclaimed
 i am losing my personal
 identity as a worm
 my individuality
 is melting away from me
 odds crawl i am becoming
 part and parcel of
 this bloody robin
 so help me i am thinking
 like a robin and not
 like a worm any
 longer yes yes i even
 find myself agreeing
 that a robin must live
 i still do not
 understand with my mentality
 why a robin must live
 and yet i swoon into a
 condition of belief

...

archy

(From archy and mehitabel, by
 Don Marquis.)

On Challenging Doubtful Premises:

From this example
 we may learn how
 important it is for us
 to detect and challenge
 dubious premises and
 assumptions at an
 early stage. Otherwise
 we may lose track of
 them, and 'swoon
 into a condition
 of belief'.

R.W. Binkley Oct. 1979

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